

CALFED OPERATIONS COORDINATION GROUP
JULY 23, 1998 MEETING NOTES AND ACTION ITEMS

Review of June 25 meeting notes

In the first paragraph of the Splittail subsection of the **Fishery Status** section NMFS was incorrectly identified as the reviewing agency on the federal status of splittail. The statement should have read: The USFWS comment period on the federal status of Sacramento splittail ends July 17, 1998.

Announcements

The following handouts were provided at the meeting:

1. SWP Operations Package, DWR, L. Gage
2. Combined State and Federal Splittail Salvage '95 and '98, Z. Hymanson
3. Letters between SDWA and USBR, J. Renning

SWRCB

The Bay-Delta water right hearing has been completed for Phase 1. The deadline for submitting exhibits for Phase 5 dealing with southern Delta salinity and dissolved oxygen has been extended to August 4. The deadline for submitting closing arguments for Phase 1 is August 14. Additional hearing dates were announced for September 15, 16, 22, 23, and 24.

If there is sufficient evidence presented in Phase 2 to show it is appropriate to go forward with the San Joaquin River Agreement, an additional phase (Phase 2A) of the hearing will be scheduled. Phase 2A will be scheduled to immediately follow Phase 5. These two phases may follow Phase 4 if there has been sufficient time to review presubmitted evidence for Phase 5 at the conclusion of Phase 4. Otherwise, Phases 5 and 2A will commence later in the proceedings.

UPDATE: On August 12, Chairman Caffrey announced that the SWRCB would hold Phase 2A. Additional hearing days were also announced for October 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 27, 28, and 29.

Operations

CVP/SWP Operations Status: The net Delta outflow is 27,000 cfs and excess conditions are forecasted for the remainder of the year. Lake Oroville and San Luis Reservoir levels have been decreasing to increase power generation during

the present period of high energy demand. The wet hydrology in 1998 has created the conditions for this operational flexibility.

The Delta Cross Channel Gates opened on July 17 for recreational purposes.

The CVP reported the following reservoir peak fill dates:

<u>Reservoir</u>	<u>Date of Peak Fill</u>
Shasta	June 18
Trinity	July 9
Folsom	July 17
New Melones	July 19
Millerton	July 21 *

* This may or may not be the peak fill date for Millerton Lake depending on the outcome of a new spillway gate test.

The compliance point for temperature control on the Sacramento River is currently at Bend Bridge.

San Joaquin Hydrology: Flows will remain high for the remainder of the year.

Calendar of Operations: AFRP Delta Action 7 establishes July exports based on X2 location and June exports. This action will not have an impact on water deliveries this year. A number of issues will need to be cleared up for the 1999 operations plan concerning this action. Reductions in exports due to fishery concerns and/or flood relief could reduce June exports and therefore unjustifiably affect allowable July exports. Some sort of "unimpaired exports" determination may offer a solution to overcome this problem.

AFRP Delta Action 6 identifies operation of the Delta Cross Channel Gates in the October through January period based on the Spring-Run Chinook Salmon Protection Plan. The Plan calls for the default gate position to be open in October and November and closed for December and January.

AFRP Delta Action 8 performs an adaptive management experiment to determine how variation in exports in December and January affect survival of Chinook salmon smolts. During the test period last year exports were high in December and low in January. This year the preference will be for low exports in December and high exports in January. A problem may be encountered this year during the high export test due to an insufficient amount of vacant storage space. A couple of possible ways to circumvent this problem would be to 1) hold space in San Luis Reservoir exclusively for the test or 2) run a San Joaquin

Valley recirculation test concurrently. A guarantee for subsequent filling would be required by the Projects if alternative 1 were selected.

In October, DWR and USBR plan to have a preliminary assessment of AFRP Action impacts to project operations for 1999. During the assessment period, input will be requested from the fisheries agencies on steelhead and the Spring-Run Protection Plan.

Delta Operations Criteria: Water quality is good and excess conditions exist in the Delta. Delta smelt salvage is minimal.

The experiment to evaluate the modification of the Suisun Marsh Salinity Control Gate flashboards on adult, fall-run chinook salmon is scheduled to take place in October. The test is likely to be the only reason for the gates to be operated this fall since water quality is not expected to be a concern in the Marsh. More information on this test will be provided at the next CALFED Ops meeting.

Temporary Barriers: Installation of the barriers is not likely this year due to high flows at Vernalis.

No Name Group

CALFED Bay - Delta Program: The NNG has recently been tasked with generating a prioritized list of tools for CALFED Bay-Delta Program Stage 1 implementation. The list includes CVPIA Section 3406(b)(2) Toolbox Group actions as well as other longer term actions. Over the past month the NNG has developed a list of criteria on which to evaluate the actions. The list of actions has been divided among five subgroups and the evaluation criteria are being applied. The objective is to furnish the CALFED Policy Group with a final prioritized list in September.

The CALFED Diversion Effects on Fisheries (Population) Team has been brought into the process and the objective of the NNG is to present several preliminary prioritized lists to the CALFED Ops Group meeting on August 27.

Joint Point of Diversion: Earlier this year the NNG had begun work to reach a consensus on JPD to present to the SWRCB during Phase 6 of the Bay-Delta Hearings. This objective has been subsumed into the total actions list requested by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program Stage 1 implementation.

The USBR will summarize the results of the earlier NNG effort in their testimony for the Phase 6 of the hearings. The USBR feels that most of the proposals made at that time concerned real - time operational matters on the allocation of water developed by JPD, and consequently were not able to be modeled.

Fishery Status

Delta smelt: DWR reported that salvage has been low in June and July and most activity has been observed in the Petaluma River, Napa River and Montezuma Slough.

Chinook Salmon: Spring-run will remain a state candidate species through the end of this year. The Spring-Run Protection Plan will be implemented as was done last year. DFG recommended to the Fish and Game Commission that spring-run be listed as threatened. DFG expects a notice to list before the end of 1998.

DFG reports that snorkel surveys have been conducted for spring-run on Deer and Butte Creeks. Results of the survey will be made available in August.

Aerial surveys have identified over 100 winter-run redds upstream and three downstream of the Red Bluff Diversion Dam. The high flows this year have provided relatively good temperature control downstream of the diversion dam.

Official escapement estimates are primarily generated by fish counts at Red Bluff Diversion Dam. High flows have caused problems in counting returns at RBDD this year. The estimate this year will have lower statistical confidence due to the higher proportion of fish that were missed due to the opening of the diversion dam gates in the end of May and beginning of June. Preliminary winter-run escapement estimates may be available at the next CALFED Ops meeting.

A supplementary method for determining escapement of winter-run is through carcass surveys. Carcass survey estimates are generated by recording the number of tagged carcasses recovered from a previous week's tagging and by applying statistical methods. This is the third year for the carcass survey and the method is being continuously refined.

NMFS has identified fall-run and late fall-run chinook together as one environmental species unit and proposes a threatened status. Spring-run chinook are considered a separate ESU and NMFS proposes an endangered status. The comment period for the listings ended June 30. The final determination is currently scheduled for February 1999 but may be extended six months if necessary.

Steelhead: Prohibition of take under ESA section 4(d) is under development and scheduled to be issued in late summer or fall.

There is debate among biologists on the presence of Central Valley Steelhead in the San Joaquin River Basin and in particular the Stanislaus River. Steelhead have not been observed in the Tuolumne and Merced Rivers in over 20 years. An IEP work team is developing sampling protocol to confirm the presence or absence of steelhead in a waterway.

Temperature control is the most likely protective action to be considered if the presence of steelhead is confirmed in the San Joaquin River. However, steelhead are much less sensitive to temperature than chinook salmon.

Splittail: 1998 has been a good recruitment year for splittail similar to 1995. The distribution this year has been in the Yolo Bypass, Butte Creek, Feather River, and most predominately at Mossdale on the San Joaquin River. Patterns of catch per unit effort have been similar in 1995 and 1998.

A stakeholder inquired about the relative splittail population differences between 1995 and 1998. Although data was not available at the meeting, DWR indicated a comparison could be estimated using RTM data from both years.

The FWS comment period on the federal status of Sacramento splittail ended July 17, 1998. DWR outlined its submitted comments as follows:

- the population still appears resilient based on data from '96 - '98.
- the adult stock did not show a major decline during the drought
- range has changed little over the past two decades
- year class strength is controlled by flood plain inundation
- the Yolo and Sutter bypasses are important habitat
- water project entrainment is not having an effect on the population level

Stakeholder representing SDWA suggested monitoring of splittail on Paradise Cut in addition to that being done on the San Joaquin River. Paradise Cut is approximately seven miles long and connects the San Joaquin River with Old River, branching off the San Joaquin just upstream of Mossdale.

DWR announced a workshop on splittail to be conducted August 11.

Agenda Items for the Next Meeting . . . August 27